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News Release

ICE RETURNS \$2.7 MILLION TO NICARAGUA THAT HAD BEEN EMBEZZLED BY FORMER PRESIDENT AND TAX COMMISSIONER

Action Represents the Latest Success of ICE Foreign Corruption Task Force in Miami

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA -- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Miami Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC) Jesus Torres and United States Ambassador to Nicaragua, Honorable Barbara C. Moore, today presented the Republic of Nicaragua with a \$2.7 million check to return funds that were embezzled from the Treasury of Nicaragua and illegally invested in South Florida.

The repatriated funds stem from the seizure and forfeiture of eight certificates of deposit and a luxury condominium in Key Biscayne, Fla., that were purchased with funds embezzled by former Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Aleman and Byron Jerez, Nicaragua's former tax commissioner.

The ICE-led Foreign Corruption Task Force in Miami, in coordination with the ICE Asset Identification and Removal Group, conducted the two-year investigation that resulted in the seizure of U.S. assets traced to the diversion of embezzled Nicaraguan government funds.

"This case illustrates ICE's commitment to curb political corruption around the globe. It also highlights our efforts to keep the proceeds of foreign corruption from ending up in the United States. Our goal is to find these illicit funds and return them to nations whose treasuries have been looted," said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Jesus Torres. "With today marking the first anniversary of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, ICE is proud to play a key role in the fight against bribery, extortion and political corruption."

The \$2.7 million forfeiture represents the largest to date made by the ICE Task Force in Miami. Created in August 2003, the Foreign Corruption Task Force is comprised of agents from ICE; prosecutors from the Miami U.S. Attorney's Office; and agents from other federal agencies that participate on a part-time basis. The Foreign Corruption Task Force represents the only task force in the United States that specifically targets the proceeds of public corruption, bribery and embezzlement emanating from foreign nations.

Both Aleman and Jerez have been convicted of various charges in Nicaragua relating to these embezzled funds and are serving sentences in Nicaragua.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.